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AUTHOR Griesel, Patricia
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ABSTRACT

"Collaboration" appears to be a popular trend in business and education as it is discussed more and more frequently in publications. One of the problems associated with collaboration is the lack of clear definition among similar terms such as cooperation, team effort, and partnerships. This paper briefly reviews the literature related to the concept of collaboration and adopts a three-level definition among the terms collaboration, coordination, and cooperation. Cooperation forms the base, coordination forms the second level, and collaboration, the most complex of the three, forms the third level. Each level is generically higher according to the complexity of the process. All three levels must interrelate. When collaboration is viewed as a current organizational structure in education, collaborations are defined as organizational and interorganizational structures where resources, power, and authority are shared in order to achieve common goals that could not be accomplished singly. Another problem related to collaboration is the future. Often the future or success of a collaborative effort rests on the critical issue of ethics. When values collide, collaborations often falter or fail because there was no consensus of ethical guidelines established by the participants. A model to help establish guidelines is suggested which provides a check list of items to be considered, includes a sample of ethical guidelines, and offers a self-explanatory generic model for self-evaluation of ethical issues. Contains 25 references. (Author/DK)

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Ethics of Collaborations: A Quest for Guidelines

Patricia Griesel

University of Arizona

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Abstract

"Collaboration" is seen as a popular trend in business and education as it appears more and more frequently in publications. One of the problems associated with collaboration is the lack of clear definition among similar terms such cooperation, team effort, and partnerships. This paper briefly reviews the literature related to the concept of collaboration and adopts a three level definition among the terms collaboration, coordination, and cooperation.

Another problem related to collaboration is the future. Often the future or success of a collaborative effort rests on the critical issue of ethics. When values collide, collaborations often falter or fail because there was no consensus ethical guidelines established by the participants The author suggests a model to help establish guidelines provides a check-list of items to be considered, includes a sample of ethical guidelines, and offers a self-explanatory generic model for self-evaluation of ethical issues.

Ethics of Collaborations: A Quest for Guidelines

> A world that is, in the long run "safe for democracy" is one in which processes of self-determination, freedom to inquire, to know, to criticize, to organize, to oppose, and to decide together are evolving.
>
> Francis T. Villemain (1976)

INTRODUCTION

The goal of this paper is two-fold. The first purpose is to come to terms with the meaning of "collaboration"; the second is a quest for ethical guidelines for collaborations. The sequence of this paper is: (1) the identification of the method of inquiry, (2) the adoption of a definition of collaboration, (3) the presentation of the need for ethics,(4) the introduction of a model to formulate ethical guidelines, (5) the development of a check-list to help evaluate selected ethical guidelines, (6) illustrations of sample guidelines, and (7) the inclusion of a generic model for a self-evaluation of ethical issues in collaborations.

METHOD OF INQUIRY

The first step in the quest for guidelines is to determine what method of inquiry is to be used. T. Frank Saunders' theoretical-analogical model offers a methodologically sound way to develop understanding in any inquiry. This particular three level model is chosen because it has integrity; it is both

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reducible and expandable. The first level reveals the content (immediate), the second level the contextualization (mediate), and the third level, the value judgment. The rules governing the levels demand that they be interrelated; each successively higher level is considered to be generically higher as well. Thus, the criteria for judgment can be examined for adequacy in terms of the structure (Saunders & Decker, 1971). This method is basic to the adoption of a definitional term for collaborations and for the quest for ethical guidelines.

DEFINITION OF COLLABORATIONS

Recent proliferations of writings on collaborations have confused and misled organization development scholars and administrators. The range of terms identifying some form of interrelationship among agencies more commonly appear in the literature as team effort, partnerships, cooperation, and collaboration. According to Sharon Kagan (1991), the confusion and misuses occur for three reasons: (1) collaboration is seen as "operational strategies", (2) collaboration is used interchangeably with other terms, and (3) collaboration is equated with cooperation and coordination (p. 1).

The terms cooperation, team effort, and partnerships appear quite frequently in business and in educational organization. Cooperation is seen as a joint operation and a common effort. Partnerships convey a corporate image of legal and economic

means. Team effort implies competition. It also suggests a code of conduct whereby the team interest takes precedence over the individual's interest (Raelin, 1986, p. 234). Confusion occurs among these terms because collaboration is seen as operational under the stated concepts. Kagan (1991) equates these with "linkages" (p. 1).

The second reason for confusion, according to Kagan, is that collaboration is used interchangeably and that it encompasses a variety of "...entities including councils, task forces, consortia, interagency cabinets, coalitions, and committees (p. 1)." The third and most troublesome type of confusion is the misuse of collaboration for coordination. Kagan explains that this difficulty arises because the three terms - cooperation, coordination, and collaboration, are used synonymously in everyday language. This usage, sanctioned by by the American Psychological Association (1988) and by the U.S. Department of Education (1986), adds to the confusion (Pp. 2-3).

Kagan's analysis of the usage of the three terms, while not in total agreement with the literature, also implies a hierarchy in these definitions ((Pp. 2-3). Kagan's three level definition of collaboration where cooperation forms the base, coordination forms the second level, and collaboration, the most complex of the three, forms the third level, is used in this work because the hierarchy follows the criteria for the epistemological model adopted for this inquiry. Each level is generically higher

according to the complexity of the process; all three level must interrelate. When collaboration is viewed as a current organizational structure in education, a three level definition gains credibility. Kagan expands the definition and for the purpose of this paper,

> ...collaborations are defined as organizational and interorganizational structures where resources, power, and authority are shared and where people are brought together to achieve common goals that could not be accomplished by a single individual or organization independently (Kagan, 1991, p.3).

NEED FOR ETHICS OF COLLABORATIONS

The need for ethics in education and educational research is well established. Jonas Soltis writes "Education is a public trust. All who are given the power to shape and direct it have a great responsibility for the way the lives of numerous human beings turn out (Eisner & Peshkin, 1990, p. 256)." This extends to the collaborative organization with its potentially greater responsibility because those involved are now informing at all levels within the organization and without the community. Even though the collaboration model developed by Saunders and Schlessman-Frost (1992) offers framework for design, management, implementation, and evaluation, there remains a need for ethics as a pervasive thread for all components.

The concerns and problems reported in recent literature point to the need for ethical guidelines in collaborations. Goldstein & Schlessman-Frost (1992) identify three barriers to collaboration: (1) turf guarding, (2) the non-collaborative collaborator, and (3) the lack of precedents. Turf guarding

reflects the fear of losing the territory held by the participant as well as the lack of preparation for the necessary team work required in successful collaborations. The non-collaborative collaborator is an individual who attends the meetings but fails in the area of responsibility. Lack of precedents for collaboration as a new undertaking is common; there is no perfect prescription for avoiding false starts and problems. Well intentioned planners all share frustration of a new plan (p. 10-12).

The remedies for these barriers are strongly linked to to ethical issues. Underlying turf guarding is the issue of possible exploitation among participants. The positive results of collaboration, according to the authors, is the best remedy. Ethical guidelines would be helpful when participants cannot get past a barrier. Underlying the non-collaborative collaborator is often some ethical issue of values. Goldstein & Schlessman-Frost recommend that participation be encouraged and that a common value be identified with the unwilling collaborator. Ethical guidelines in this instance would help establish a respect for the past experience at the root of the reluctance. Once identified, this issue could be addressed in a positive way.

In discussing the lack of precedents, the third barrier, Goldstein & Schlessman-Frost write "...that part of the power of

shared decision making is the prerogative to redefine as you go (p. 11)." This also becomes an ethical issue when decisions must be made and a consensus cannot be reached. Who decides, how do they decide, and what happens when they can't agree?

Evidence of ethical problems facing organizations is beginning to surface as schools seek help from corporations. Teddy Haessig Irvine (1992) writes that the most significant legal barrier to collaboration is finding constitutional mechanisms for fair and equal distribution of corporate resources. Irvine (1992) writes:

> Such contributions to the schools are to be welcomed, if they can be made within an equal protection framework that does not enhance the position of some students, or some school districts, at the expense of others (p.21).

Irvine suggests that business and education leaders should be guided by fairness and equity before resorting to the use of the Fourteenth Amendment as a basis for litigation (equal spending per pupil concept) (p.22). Careful consideration of legal and political ramifications are required. She adds, "Continuing forms of evaluation and review should be designed with the values of equality and equity always in mind (p.25)."

The need for ethics is clearly evident. Perhaps Sidney Hook's reflection on Dewey's philosophy best expresses the practical aspect of the problems facing collaborations:

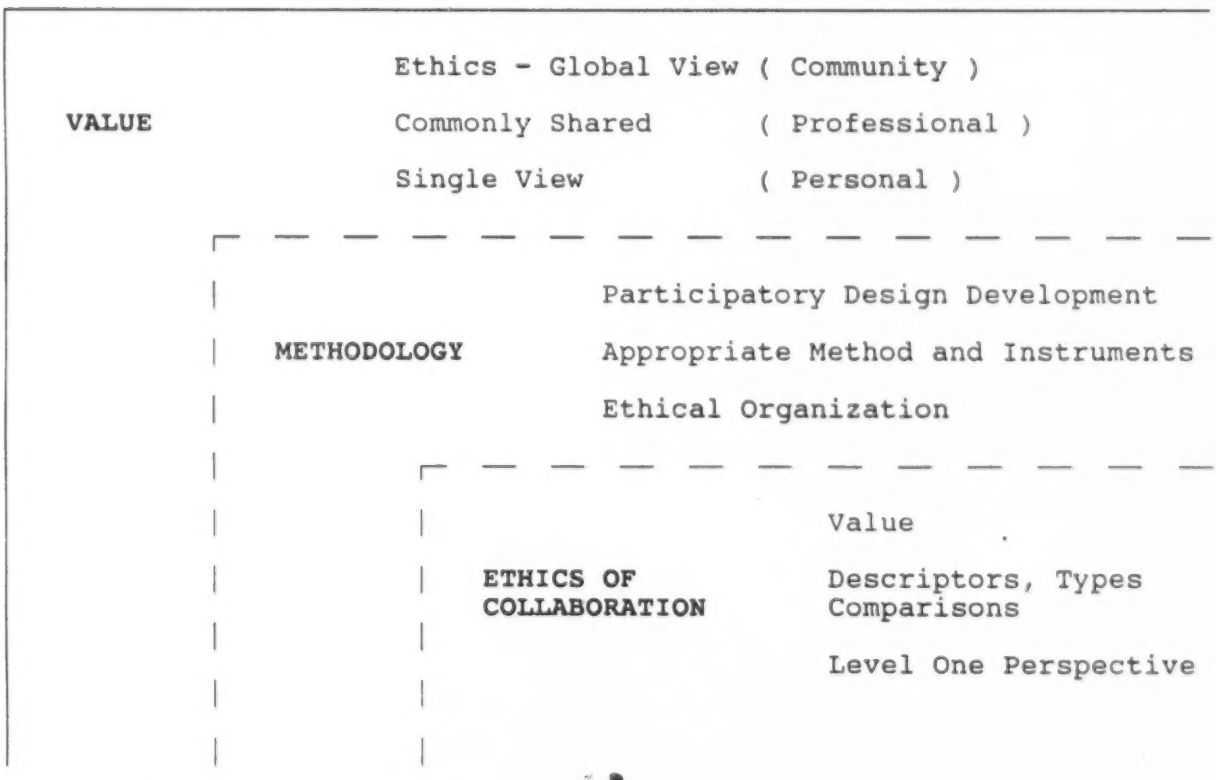
> ...and no one has stressed the importance of the moral aspects of education more than Dewey. But when is it

> relevant to ask the questions - What ought our behavior be? What is worth pursuing and possesing? What is the best thing to say or do in this situation? - can we improve on Dewy's reply that such questions are to be answered not by habit, not by drift, not by intuition, not by revelation, but by critical intelligence informed by all the relevant facts in the situation (Hook, 1973, p. 84).

ETHICS OF COLLABORATION MODEL

Amy Schlessman-Frost's democratic model (1990) was used as the basis for this design. Its value as a model lies in the fact that it provides informing hypothesis, "...it is comprehensive, and each category applies at each level in parallel form (p.89)."

FIGURE A: **ETHICS OF COLLABORATION MODEL**
(Adapted from Schlessman-Frost's Democratic Model)



VALUE

Fundamental to the value of ethics of collaboration is a basic understanding of ethics itself. The scope of ethics is broad and complex. It is perhaps, for the purpose of this paper, best defined in terms of its nature and function by Peter Singer (1979):

> Ethics, though not consciously created is a product of social life which has the function of promoting values common to the members of society.

Singer characterizes the vast study of ethics by the commonalities:

> (1) justification of an ethical principle cannot be in terms of any partial or sectional group.
>
> (2) Ethics takes a universal view point ie. making ethical judgments goes beyond personal likes and dislikes.
>
> (3) requires those making ethical judgment to consider all phases and adopt the course of action most likely to maximize the interest of those affected (Pp. 11-12).

Similarly, the model does impose some commonalities to ethics of collaboration at the value focus. The single or personal view may be compared with the level one perspective. Each member of the collaborative organization is valued for his/her role. Each member brings his/her own values into the collaborative organization in regard to duties and responsibilities. And each member shares in the decision of of accepting or rejecting an ethical guideline.

At the second level, ethical judgement goes beyond personal likes and dislikes. An interactive process is in effect. Placed in a larger context, it operates among agencies at a professional level. At the third level, ethical judgment is is made. Members and member agencies consider all possibilities. Based on their enlightened self-interest, the members and member agencies, acting in concert, adopt a course of action through consensus.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology requires that all members participate in (1) the organization of the ethical guidelines for collaboration, (2) the selection of the appropriate methods and instruments, and (3) the development of the participatory design. The organization of the ethical guidelines is not nearly as important as the selection of appropriate methods and instruments and criteria for the ethical guidelines of collaboration. The following three questions were used as criteria for the sample guidelines:

(1) Do the guidelines promote the overall mission of the collaboration?

For example, decisions based on consensus, member and member agencies work in their enlightened self-interest, and that the organization operates in a democratic and equitable way, would be considered necessary in promoting the overall mission.

(2) Do the guidelines allow for further development?

For example, the obligation to educate members and member agencies in cooperation, coordination and collaborative processes is considered a key element in the success of a collaborative organization.

(3) Do the guidelines encourage responsibility, good will and cooperation?

For example, the members and member agencies perform their duties based on their roles in the organization. As stakeholders, they operate in a responsible and cooperative way to promote the overall mission of the collaboration.

In addition to criteria, appropriate methods and instruments, participatory design development requires a shared involvement. With so many stakeholders involved in the collaborative organization, there must be a shared decision making process at all levels. Various cultures, business organizations, community organizations, school organizations, health organizations, and private organizations may all bring a particular expertise to the collaborative table. The values of each member and member organization will probably vary in some way. The guidelines and consequences of those guidelines are subject to inquiry and evaluation. Participants study the issues and make informed decisions based on a consensus. As part of the democratic process, the participatory design development strengthens the collaborative organization.

ETHICS OF COLLABORATION:

At the level one perspective in this model, the members and member agencies define ethics of collaboration, compare the types of ethical standards, and subsequently adopt the ethical guidelines they need for their collaborative organization. The members of the organization may decide on concrete and

specific guidelines or more abstract ones. If the stakeholders establish the guidelines, they are more likely to be followed. If the guidelines encourage responsibility, good will, and cooperation, member and member agencies will be more committed. If the guidelines allow for further development and promote the overall mission of the collaborative organization, success is more likely.

SUMMARY

The original goal of this paper, a clearer definition of of collaborations and a quest for ethical guidelines, is obviously complex. The confusion of terminology and the complexity of any study in ethics demands thoughtful attention. In this paper the use of models helps organize complex issues into manageable segments, thereby enabling the author to link the theoretical with the practical. The whole point of sound theory is to guide practice; if it doesn't work in practice, then there is probably a defect in the theory (Singer, 1979).

The following checklist and guidelines for ethics of collaborations are not absolute rules. Dewey (193) wrote this reminder about what moral (ethical) theory does not offer:

> But it does not offer a table of commandments in catechism in which answers are as definite as are the questions asked (p.175).

GUIDELINES FOR ETHICS OF COLLABORATION CHECKLIST

- [ ] Do the guidelines promote the overall mission?
- [ ] Do the guidelines consider both long and short term legal, psychological, political, social, and economic ramification?
- [ ] Do the guidelines allow for a positive conflict resolution plan?

- [ ] Are the guidelines for personal, professional, and public responsibility clearly stated?
- [ ] Do the guidelines encourage freedom of choice?
- [ ] Are there guidelines that allow for change and further development?
- [ ] Is education a key factor in ensuring continuing personal, professional, and organizational growth?

- [ ] Do the guidelines encourage goodwill, cooperation, and responsibility?
- [ ] Are the guidelines democratic and have they been established through a consensus?
- [ ] Is there a comprehensive model design to help establish the guidelines?

SAMPLE GUIDELINES FOR ETHICS OF COLLABORATIONS

(Adapted from AERA Ethical Standards and from concerns expressed by the following authors: Atkin, Kennedy, & Patrick; Blanchard; Cahn; Goldstein & Schlessman-Frost; Gomez, Bissel, Danziger, & Casselman; Hamm & Adams; House; Irvine; Kraus; Raelin; Shane; Ryan; Schlessman-Frost, and Soltis.)

I. Responsibilities of Individual Groups Within the Collaborative Organization

A. To maintain the integrity of the collaborative organization, decisions reached by consensus should be consistent with the mission of the organization where all agencies work in their enlightened self-interest without detriment to any participating agency or member.

B. Guidelines

1. Members acting in an organizational capacity should conduct their activities in such a way as to not jeopardize the overall mission of the collaborative organization.

2. Members must operate in an open and honest way among agencies. Communication must be disseminated to all members in an equitable and democratic way. No attempt should be made selectively or secretly to communicate information.

3. No member or agency should use their role in a fraudulent way.

4. The legal, social, political, psychological, and economic consequences of decisions must be anticipated and open to inquiry.

5. Member or member agencies should inform the overall organization of their qualifications and their limitations when offering an expert or consultative opinion. In addition, they should provide the positive and negative implications of the opinion as well as the the long and short term ramifications of those implications.

6. Members and agencies should have some form of measurement with which to evaluate the collaborative organizational activities.

7. Official publications from the organization to members, member agencies, and to the public must communicate in a straight-forward manner the effectiveness of the organizational policies as well as the limitations. The collaborative organization must be accountable to all stakeholders within and surrounding the collaborative organization.

8. Members and member agencies of a collaborative organization have an obligation to follow anti-discriminatory practices when they recruit, hire, retain, and advance supporting personnel (ie. They should not discriminate on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, physical impairments, martial status, color, social class, religion, ethnic background, national origin, or other attributes not relevant).

9. Members and member agencies of a collaborative organization should recommend or not recommend other members or member agencies on the basis of an agreed upon evaluative standards. For example, if a member meets the minimum expectations of his/her role in the organization, then he/she should receive recommendation.

10. Members and member agencies of the collaborative organization must avoid all forms of harassment, not just those actions which are cause for litigation. They must not use their professional or private position to seek personal or sexual favors or economic or professional advantages from any persons within or without the organization.

11. Members and member agencies must be continually responsive to and interested in an open exchange of ideas as part of the democratic process.

12. Members and member agencies should not be penalized for communicating in good faith violations or concerns for possible violations of these or other professional standards which have been established and agreed upon by the participants of the collaboration.

13. Members and member agencies should establish a conflict resolution plan that is democratic, justifiable, and equitable.

14. Members and member agencies should establish a continuing education program that will build success at all levels of the collaborative: i.e., leadership processes, cooperative processes, collaborative processes, coordination processes, communication processes, and any other areas that are deemed necessary by the organization to ensure its success.

15. Member and member agencies should encourage all participants to act in a responsible way in fulfilling their role in the organization.

II. Guidelines: Support Agencies, Educational Institutions and the Public

A. Members and member agencies of the collaborative organization operate within a diverse range of settings and institutions. It is therefore of prime importance that members and member agencies respect the rights, privacy, dignity, and sensitivities of those who are the stakeholders in the collaborative organization. The stakeholders are all those who are participants both within and outside the collaborative organization.

B. Guidelines

1. Participants, more specifically students and/or their families, or their guardians have the right to be informed about the risks or potential consequences and to give their informed consent before participating in any activity that will effect them. Members and member agencies should communicate the purpose of the proposed activity, explain who will be involved, and how it will be implemented. They should also communicate any change and inform them of their right to withdraw at any time.

2. Members and member agencies must be straightforward and honest in their relationships with participants and appropriate institutional representatives.

3. Members and member agencies should be sensitive to any locally established customs, policies, or guidelines and should make every effort to be informed about them.

4. Members and member agencies should exercise caution to ensure that there is no exploitation for personal gain. If there are loses or gains, they must be justified by the mission; and a consensus must be reached in the justification.

5. Operating under enlightened self interest, members and member agencies should take care not to coerce or demand agreement by unwilling members.

6. Member and member agencies should be sensitive to cultural, religious, gender, and other significant differences when organizing, coordinating, cooperating, collaborating, evaluating, and reporting.

7. Members and member agencies should make every effort to communicate the importance of each participant in the collaborative. Support and encouragement should be provided along with contingency plans in the event of member or agency withdrawal due to failure in reconciliation.

GENERIC MODEL FOR SELF EVALUATION OF ETHICAL ISSUES IN COLLABORATIONS					
Perspective / Issue Categories	PERSONAL	PROFESSIONAL	PUBLIC	ENLIGHTENED SELF-INTEREST DECISION	CONSENSUS DECISION (could live with it)
POLITICAL Pro: Nuetral: Con:					
ECONOMIC Pro: Nuetral: Con:					
LEGAL Pro: Nuetral: Con:					
PSYCHOLOGICAL Pro: Nuetral: Con:					
SOCIAL Pro: Nuetral: Con:					
OTHER					

(Adapted from Effective Evaluation: Models for Accountability by Joe Engle, Frank Saunders, Roy Blake and Yvonna S. Lincoln's matrix published in The Qualitative Inquiry in Education)

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